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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Developments in Indochina

State Dept. review completed

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

SOUTH VIETNAM

The Communists have reorganized their assets in the Saigon area as part of their preparations for a cease-fire.

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The province chief in Phuoc Long is pessimistic about the government's ability to defend the provincial capital.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Soviets have been more critical of US policy in recent weeks, particularly on Vietnam.

LAOS

Communist units along Route 13 continue to probe government defenses.

CAMBODIA

Government forces trying to clear the banks of the Mekong are meeting only light enemy resistance.

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The annual Chinese aid agreement for Sihanouk was signed on 13 January.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The Communists reportedly have established a new command for Saigon and its immediately surrounding area.

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the new command will be designated Military Region 4 (MR-4) and will include Saigon's 11 precincts and eight districts from the provinces immediately surrounding the capital.

COSVN intends to exercise direct leadership over MR-4, and is putting high-level, trusted cadre in the region's administrative positions. COSVN organized the new command to be in a better position to cope with expected government moves to counter Viet Cong activity in the capital area after a cease-fire.

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The new command will direct political as well as military operations. Clandestine Communist political agents around Saigon are to be categorized "strategic" and "tactical" to utilize better their capabilities and access. Improved communications also have been called for between the region's headquarters and its agents in the field. A new military division reportedly will be assigned to MR-4, probably made up of units from the enemy's 5th, 7th and 9th divisions that have operated historically in the area. The force structure also will include a heavy artillery regiment, and there will be an infantry battalion and a sapper company in each of the eight districts surrounding Saigon.

In addition to the new command for the Saigon area, COSVN reportedly is also setting up the "Eastern Nam Bo Military Region" to include Binh Duong, Binh Long, Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and Tay Ninh provinces. This new command,

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[redacted] will facilitate military support for MR-4 operations in the capital area. Viet Cong cadre in the old subregions around Saigon reportedly are being assigned to the Eastern Nam Bo command, but its stage of development is considerably behind that of MR-4.

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[redacted]
[redacted] it has become apparent that some streamlining of various subregional commands was undertaken in advance of the enemy's military offensive last spring. The latest changes, however, appear intended to better serve Communist interests in the politically crucial areas near Saigon after hostilities cease. Many of the enemy's organizational changes so far appear to be in the initial stages of implementation and more time probably will be needed to flesh out commands fully and establish priorities. [redacted]

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Pessimistic Outlook in Phuoc Long Province

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[redacted]
[redacted] government forces there prob-
ably could not defend the provincial capital of Song
Be if the Communists launch an all out attack. [redacted]

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[redacted] provincial
military forces have been weakened since July 1972,
when the Communists last attacked the city, by the
transfer of two South Vietnamese Army battalions and
by a lack of replacements for combat losses they suf-
fered in last year's fighting. [redacted]

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[redacted] the infiltration of addi-
tional North Vietnamese units from Cambodia, appar-
ently now in process, could foreshadow some sort of
major enemy action in the Phuoc Long - Binh Long pro-
vincial area. [redacted] the
Communists recently moved in the 201st Regiment and
four independent battalions, formerly committed to
the fighting in Cambodia. [redacted]

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[redacted] the regiment was infiltrated with
the mission of attacking the Binh Long provincial
capital of An Loc in the final hours before a cease-
fire takes hold. Other Communist forces, chiefly from
the 9th Division, have been detected in both Binh
Long and Phuoc Long provinces. These forces are in
position to be used against either An Loc or Song Be,
should the enemy so choose. [redacted]

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

For the past several weeks, the Soviets have taken a more critical line toward the US, particularly regarding US military actions in Vietnam. More general anti-American themes have been reintroduced into Soviet propaganda, and several Soviet officials have picked up Brezhnev's linkage between Vietnam developments and future progress in US-Soviet relations. Throughout this period, however, these negative themes have been balanced by optimistic statements that international tensions are easing and by positive statements about the value of good US-Soviet relations. Brezhnev's most recent remarks on the Vietnam problem, delivered to reporters at Minsk on 11 January, were non-polemical and optimistic about the Paris negotiations.

Brezhnev's speech at the USSR's 50th anniversary on 21 December set the tone for subsequent Soviet reaction. Brezhnev called the war the "dirtiest" in American history, condemned the US Government for its "barbarian acts," reasserted Soviet support and assistance for North Vietnam, and said that as far as future US-Soviet relations were concerned, "much would depend" on resolution of the Vietnam conflict. Moscow's initial reaction to the renewed US bombing, a TASS statement on 19 December, was by contrast more restrained and avoided any link between the war and the USSR's relations with the US.

Despite the harshness in Brezhnev's remarks on the war, other portions of his speech dealing with the US were unusually conciliatory. He noted the "realistic" foreign policy course being pursued by Washington in other areas, characterized the summit as a "big step" forward in relations, and pointed to benefits for all mankind of increased US-Soviet

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cooperation. Moreover, an editorial in *Pravda* on 27 December on the anniversary not only failed to repeat Brezhnev's criticism of the US or to mention the bombing of North Vietnam, but stressed the policy of detente with the West, including the US.

Like Brezhnev's speech, the reaction of Soviet officials to the renewed bombing has been mixed. At the anniversary reception in the Kremlin, Ambassador Beam reported that Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov was surly and uncommunicative. Publicist Yuri Zhukov reportedly said that his government had been helping the US with the North Vietnamese and that the bombing had placed it in a most embarrassing position. Zhukov added that his government found it hard to deal with the US since it was always pulling off surprises, and that "things cannot go on much longer the way they are." Two weeks later, Zhukov wrote an article in *Pravda* that charged that "hawks" in the US were bent on using international detente to subvert the socialist countries

The traditional Soviet New Year's message of Premier Kosygin also alluded to the effect of Vietnam on international developments, but stopped short of drawing any connection between Vietnam and US-Soviet relations. Kosygin noted the "positive changes" that have taken place in international affairs, but warned that imperialism--citing the US bombing in Vietnam--had not abandoned the use of force.

About the same time, other Soviet officials reportedly were saying that the Soviet leadership favored an improvement in relations with the US, but that the Vietnam situation acted as a brake on continued forward movement. CPSU Secretary Boris Ponomarev told [redacted] that the Soviet leaders had not given up the idea of im-

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proving relations with the US, but that there is only a tenuous rapprochement at the moment as a result of the Vietnam situation. Similarly, Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan Puzanov told the American ambassador there that he had recently attended a meeting of the Central Committee and that the Soviet leadership supported a continued improvement in relations with the US; Puzanov added, however, that this might become impossible if the Vietnam situation worsened.

The most pointed connection between the Vietnam war and developments in US-Soviet relations was left to the "unofficial" Soviet spokesman, Victor Louis. Writing in the *London Evening News* on 29 December, Louis seemed to confirm earlier rumors, emanating largely from Soviet diplomatic circles, that the Brezhnev trip to Washington will not take place until settlement of the Vietnam conflict. Louis wrote that the visit was "out of the question" until the war is over and that party leader Brezhnev will not come to the US until autumn. A week earlier, Louis had told Ambassador Beam in Moscow that the postponement of the trip was primarily due to Brezhnev's desire for a visit with more substantive results.

Although the Soviets reacted quickly and with evident relief to the cessation of the bombing and to the resumption of the Paris peace talks (Moscow announced the bombing halt before Hanoi did), Soviet media continue to criticize US policy in Vietnam. Drawing on the language of Brezhnev's speech of 21 December, the Soviets describe US actions there as "criminal" and "barbarous" and criticize US maneuvering in the peace talks. Meanwhile, other anti-American themes in Soviet propaganda have also become more pronounced. Soviet news media have been playing up domestic problems in the US (e.g., racism, poverty, crime, and political repression), but the Soviets have consistently refrained from personal attack on President Nixon.

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The latest authoritative expression of Soviet attitudes toward the US was provided by Brezhnev in remarks made to newsmen on 11 January. Awaiting the arrival of President Pompidou in Minsk, Brezhnev said that "the Vietnam affair is drawing little by little to a close" and that "the climate tends toward the meeting" with President Nixon. These remarks, however, have not so far been picked up by the Soviet media.

[REDACTED]

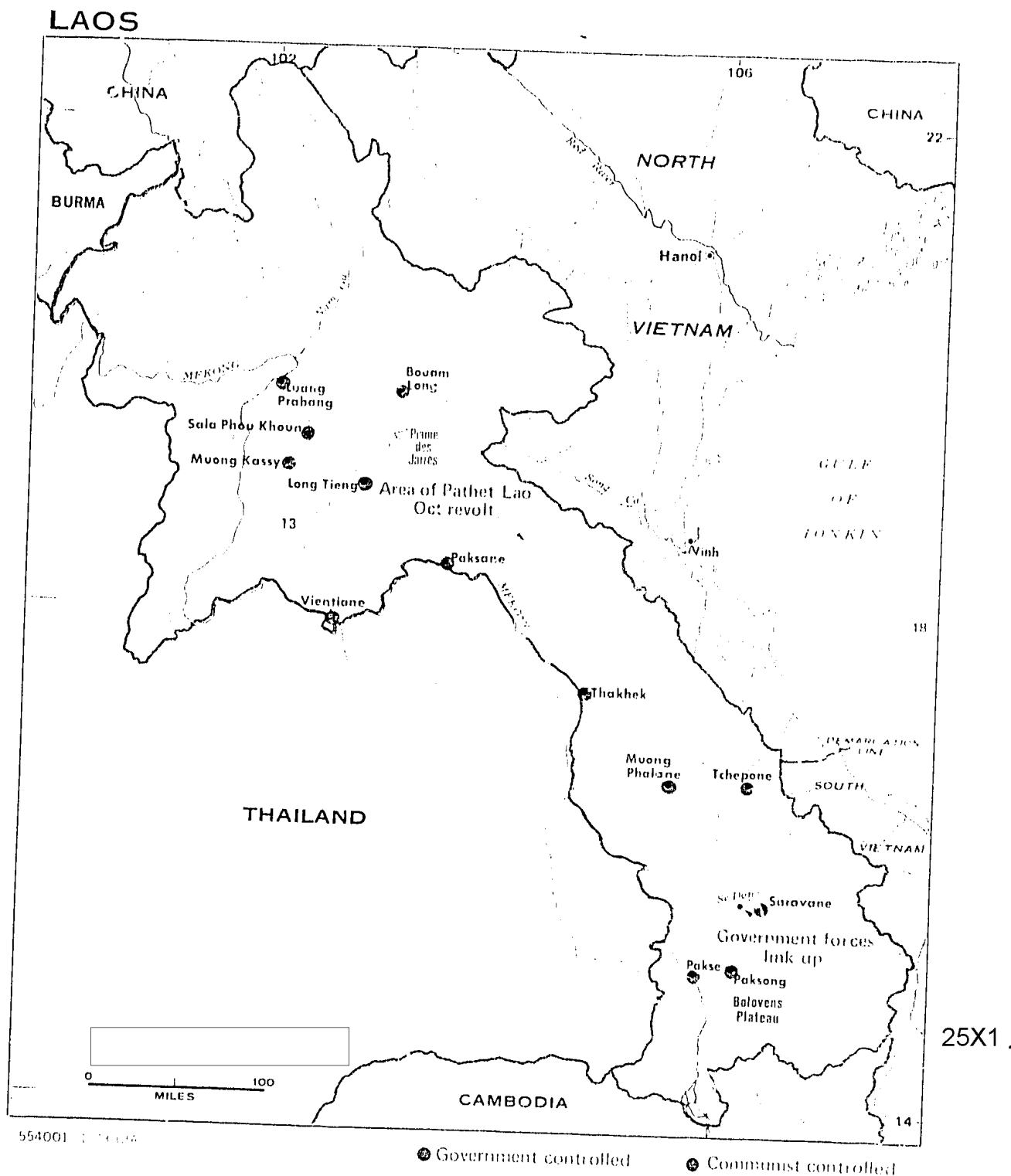
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LAOS

Government irregular units retreating from Saravane have linked up with a Lao Army force some ten miles west of the southern provincial capital. The irregulars appear to have out-distanced their North Vietnamese pursuers for the moment and are taking up defensive positions near a village occupied by Lao Army troops. Despite a week of heavy air strikes, US pilots report continued antiaircraft fire from guns emplaced around Saravane and along the road to the west.

Farther north, Communist units along Route 13 that last week mounted a tank attack on Muong Kassy continue to probe nearby government defenses.

[redacted] three North Vietnamese infantry companies and an artillery unit are participating in the enemy campaign along Route 13, but [redacted] Lao Communist troops are doing most of the fighting.

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Defectors Rejoin Communist Ranks

[redacted] a Pathet Lao colonel, who led an insurrection in October 1972, has returned to enemy ranks with 84 of his troops. The dissidents apparently gave into increasing pressure from North Vietnamese units sent to quell the uprising. Government efforts to supply the dissident troops and their families began to falter in November and all contact with them was lost in early December when a 100-man Lao Army team was chased from the dissidents' headquarters in eastern Khammoune Province, some 60 miles east of Paksane.

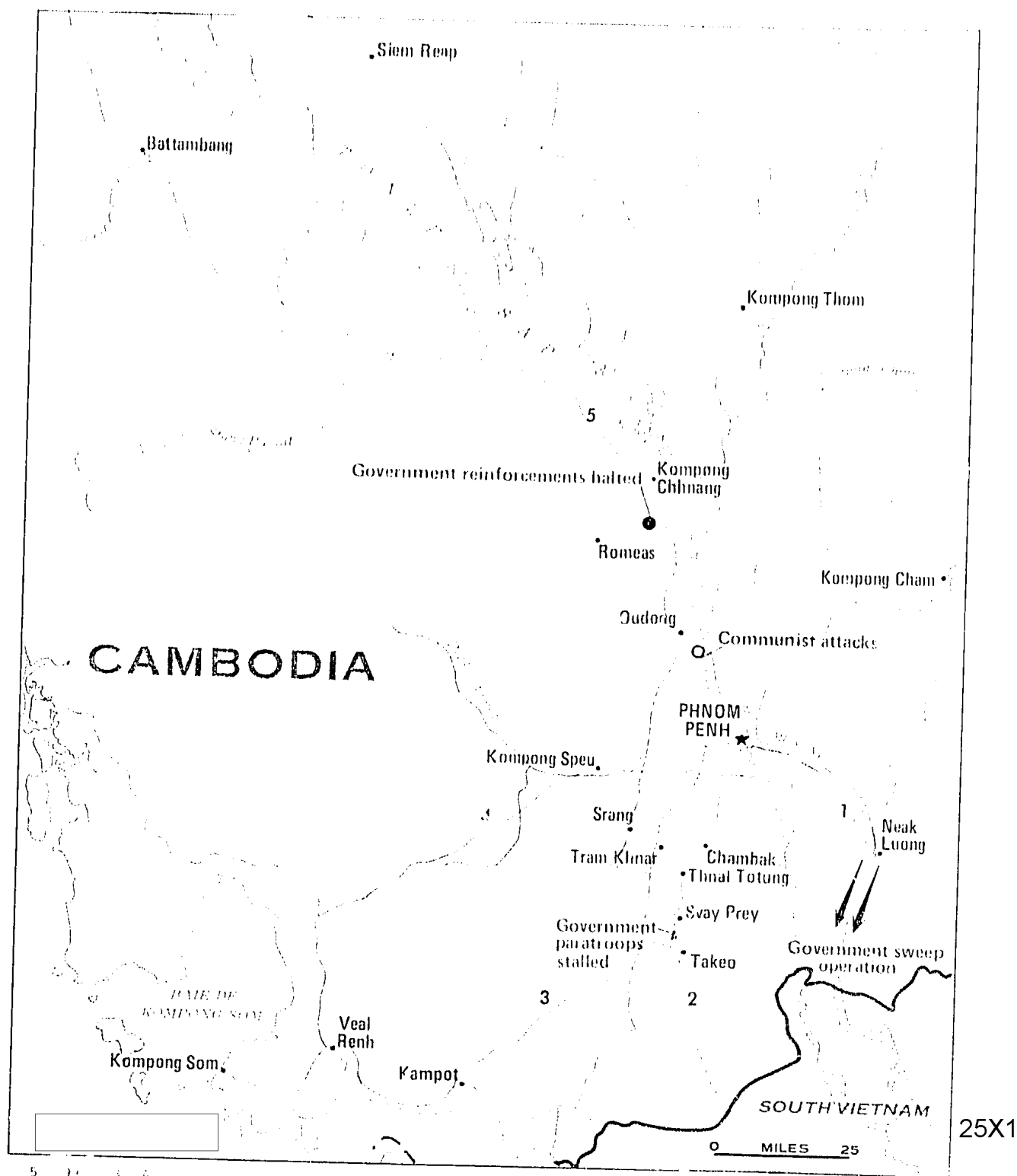
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CAMBODIA

Government forces trying to clear both banks of the Mekong River south of Neak Luong are continuing to meet only light Communist resistance. The supply convoy that was due to sail up the river from South Vietnam to Phnom Penh on 16 January has been rescheduled for 18 January, in the hope that government control over the waterway will be restored by that time.

In the south, Cambodian paratroops moving down Route 2 to relieve Communist pressure on Thnal To-tung have advanced unopposed to the town of Chambak. Other government paratroops that have been moving slowly up the highway from Takeo toward Svay Prey have run into heavy resistance. Six government battalions remain at Tram Khnar on Route 3, and several other Cambodian battalions trying to reach the nearby government garrison at Srang, have been halted by insurgent attacks a few miles north of that town.

The three government battalions in Kompong Chhnang Province attempting to reinforce the hard-pressed defenders of the town of Romeas have also been halted by stiff opposition. To the southeast, Communist elements on 14 January harassed some government positions near Oudong on Route 5. Although details on these actions are not yet available, preliminary reports indicate that the Communists forced government troops to withdraw from several small outposts in the vicinity of that town.

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Payroll Padding Investigations Continue

The Cambodian Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Brigadier General Srey Meas, has told [] that efforts to verify actual strengths of army units and to reduce payroll padding have been more difficult than anticipated. Meas said that although Cambodian Army Chief of Staff Major

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General Sosthene Fernandez has given strong support to the investigations, President Lon Nol was not providing the necessary backing when units commanded by senior officers personally close to him were involved. These officers--one of whom is Brigadier General Lon Non--are aware of this situation and have not cooperated with Meas. They believe that Fernandez will not be able to punish any corrupt officer with a rank above lieutenant colonel. For his part, Fernandez apparently intends to complete the troop count despite his problems with Lon Nol and Lon Non.

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Fernandez' efforts have at least helped make most army commanders keenly aware of the political implications of payroll padding.

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More Pressure on Phnom Penh?

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The Cambodian Army estimated that the Communists had 28 battalions--or as many as 6,500 troops--within a 40-kilometer radius of Phnom Penh at the end of 1972. Khmer insurgents make up the bulk of this force, which also includes a few Vietnamese Communist sapper, artillery, and infantry elements. Although the Khmer Communists' military position in the Phnom Penh region is improving, the insurgents probably still lack the capability for launching large-scale, sustained assaults on the city--particularly when many of their troops are already engaged in operations along Routes 1, 2, and 3.

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More Chinese Aid to Sihanouk

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The Chinese have indicated continuing support for Sihanouk by signing this year's military and economic aid agreements for his "government" on 13 January. Although the amount of aid was not announced, Sihanouk recently claimed [redacted] that it would total \$15 million for 1973. He also said Chou En-lai has assured him of continued delivery of arms via North Vietnam until a cease-fire in Vietnam--after which China would provide the Khmer Communists with dollars to buy their own weapons in Cambodia. Sihanouk made no mention of the economic portion of Peking's aid, but [redacted] most of it is used to support Sihanouk and his entourage in the Chinese capital, and to pay for maintenance of his "government's" various foreign "embassies." [redacted]

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